Esports set to redefine entertainment & sports broadcasting after UK Government awards £4m of funding to create new AI powered, immersive audience experiences.

"The Weavr Consortium has answered UK Research and Innovation's call to look at Audiences of the Future, with a groundbreaking demonstrator project exploring a cross-reality, data driven, highly personalised viewing experience for esports. The consortium consisting of ESL, York University, dock10, Cybula, Focal Point VR & Rewind will operate a £5.8mil project over two years, £4mil of which is funded by UK Research and Innovation"

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), the UK Government's non-departmental public body for innovation and research, has awarded the Weavr Consortium a two year demonstrator grant that focuses on esports broadcasting, as part of the Industry Strategy Challenge Fund (ISCF). The ISCF's "Audience of the Future" challenge looks to bring the UK's creative businesses, researchers and technologists together to create the next generation of highly immersive experiences. The Weavr consortium was selected as the winner of the Sports & Entertainment category and awarded £4 million in matched funding for the project.

Weavr will create cross-reality viewing experiences allowing fans to immerse themselves in high fidelity statistics, visualisations and data-driven stories that give them deep insights into the live match. Enabling them to seamlessly move between virtual and physical viewing, as well as utilise second screens to watch immersive esports content on the go.
The use of AI & data learning to create highly personalised viewing experiences will allow for fully interactive and individualised insights for the audience. All of which will permit this project to demonstrate insight into how audiences of the future engage in immersive experiences and the pathways to future commercialisation.

ISCF's Audience of the Future fund sees up to £33 million being invested in the evolution of storytelling and how the UK can continue to lead the world in the creative arts by exploiting immersive technologies. £16 million of the fund has been put into the demonstrator programme, which sees four industry-led consortia from the creative industries create new immersive experiences and test them with large-scale audiences. Weavr has won the Sports & Technology portion of this fund, and will utilise ESL's experience and market reach in esports to demonstrate the technology to their global audience.

"For the first time in generations, we're witnessing the birth of a new major sport, and it's happening with unprecedented speed." *ESPN The Magazine, Senior Editor, Megan Greenwall*

Esports is competitive video gaming at a professional level which has a current global audience of around 380 million people. The esports audience is the 'audience of the future' here and now with 80% of the demographic being made up of 18-35 year olds. During 2018 there were over 2.6 billion hours of esports content consumed globally across a multitude of online platforms including; Twitch, Youtube, Mixer, Facebook, Twitter etc. As well as a wide variety of consumption points such as live audience, VR and traditional single screen content. The esports industry has been on the rise with recognition from the mainstream and steady growth for the last five years of 38.2% CAGR.

- "The UK esports industry is growing rapidly, and ESL UK are right at the heart of its expansion. I'm excited to see how the Weavr project will create innovative and immersive experiences for esports fans across the globe, helping to get them even closer to the live action." Margot James MP, Minister for Digital and the Creative Industries.

Through a consortium led by ESL, the largest esports company in the world, and including leading academics and innovators across VR/AR, AI, data-driven content production and broadcast, Weavr will transform the experiences of millions of fans not only in esports, but in traditional sports broadcast and live entertainment more broadly.

As part of the 2 year demonstrator the consortium will be creating a total of 45 tech focused jobs, with scope for hundreds more UK based roles to follow in subsequent years, as well as generating services and platforms creating UK based revenue. ESL will be focusing on the overall project management, utilisation of their esports events for proof of concept and the user experience feedback for those tests. University of York will be bringing their expertise in machine learning, UX design, Human Computer Interaction & research into the convergent space between games, interactive media & TV to help sculpt the overall framework. dock10 will be leveraging their cutting edge production facilities to help test the framework during ESL's live esports events. Focal Point VR will contribute their live 8k 360° video capture hardware & software with Rewind helping to create the VR & XR apps & environments for the viewer experience. Cybula's performance computing clusters will be utilised for big data analysis & delivery.

- "At the forefront of an emerging and rapidly growing esports industry, we're in a very fortunate and unique position to have insight in the live viewing habits and interactivity of young, tech savvy and early adopting audiences" *said James Dean, MD ESL UK.* "We're ecstatic to be working alongside industry leaders across the Weavr consortium to pave the way for the next generation of immersive technology and, with UKRI's support, to realise a framework for the future of live entertainment and sports"

To find out more about Weavr contact the consortium at press@weavr.tv

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About UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)
UKRI is a new body which works in partnership with universities, research organisations, businesses, charities, and government to create the best possible environment for research and innovation to flourish**.** We aim to maximise the contribution of each of our component parts, working individually and collectively. We work with our many partners to benefit everyone through knowledge, talent and ideas.

Operating across the whole of the UK with a combined budget of more than £6 billion, UK Research and Innovation brings together the [seven Research Councils, Innovate UK and a new organisation, Research England.](#)

About ESL
ESL, a part of the international digital entertainment group MTG, is the world's largest independent esports company, leading the industry across the most popular video games with numerous online and offline competitions. It operates high profile, branded international and national leagues and tournaments such as the Intel® Extreme Masters, ESL One, ESL National Championships and other top tier stadium-size events, as well as grassroots amateur cups, leagues and matchmaking systems. ESL covers a broad field of services in gaming technology, event management, advertising and television production, fully catering to the needs of the esports ecosystem. With offices in North America, Germany, United Kingdom, Russia, France, Poland, Spain, China, and partners in many other countries, it has a truly global footprint (www.eslgaming.com).

About The University of York
The University of York is one of the world's leading universities, with a reputation as an academic powerhouse focusing on excellence in research. As a member of the elite Russel Group of universities, the University of York is a dynamic, research-intensive university committed to the development of new technologies to tackle some of the most pressing global challenges. The University of York hosts the largest research team worldwide working with esports, which includes the Digital Creativity Labs, an £18 million interdisciplinary laboratory and think tank focusing on research and innovation in games, interactive media and the rich space where they converge; as well as the Creative Media Labs, a £15m R&D partnership programme involving academia and the screen industries in Yorkshire and the Humber, designed to help those industries to harness the latest immersive and interactive tools and techniques; to develop innovative and commercially viable models for the next generation of screen storytelling. The University of York also form the main host of the £12 million EPSRC Centre for Doctoral Training in Intelligent Games and Game Intelligence, training the next generation of experts and innovators for the Creative Industries. (https://www.york.ac.uk/)

About Focal Point VR
Focal Point VR produces a range of high-end VR camera rigs and live 360 video production products based on its proprietary Ubiety ultra-high resolution software platform. These deliver solutions for broadcast quality, and upwards to UHD & 8K, VR video live streams. Focal Point VR also offers a full service production support team which can deliver end-to-end VR video production for post or live streaming. Focal Point VR's products and services are supported by class leading technology development; recently demonstrating a

camera to headset, ultra low latency, 8k 360 live stream using proprietary optimisation technology aimed at delivery over 5G networks. (http://focalpointvr.com/)

About dock10
dock10 is the UK's leading television facility, based at the heart of MediaCityUK. With ten purpose-built state of the art studios, extensive post-production facilities, archive solutions, media management and global connectivity dock10's facilities are used to make popular television shows including the award-winning drama Happy Valley, prime-time spectacular The Voice, iconic children's favourite Blue Peter and the sports fan's essential Match of the Day. The post production services produce outstanding network commercials, corporate videos and high end VFX work for everything from drama to virtual and augmented studio production. (http://www.dock10.co.uk/)

About REWIND
REWIND is an immersive content studio with a passion for AR, VR, MR and beyond…
By delivering immersive experiences for the world's largest studios, agencies and brands, REWIND leads the way in innovative digital content creation.

REWINDs team of creatives, technologists, engineers, producers and visual artists work with the latest technology and trends to ensure it is always at the forefront of innovation.

Its deep-rooted heritage in VFX and CGI production is combined with an industry-defining approach to virtual reality, augmented reality, mixed reality and experiential marketing. REWIND has a proven track record in creating memorable experiences that connect audiences, evoke emotion and always leave a lasting impression. (http://rewind.co/)

About Cybula
Cybula specialise in data mining and data analytics for Big Data applications. Our tools provide class-leading, innovative solutions for extracting business intelligence out of data gathered from monitored systems; transforming Big Data challenges into valuable business insights. Cybula AURA technology allows analysts to interact with data in highly intuitive ways, and offers powerful pattern search and modelling capabilities. Pattern search provides the means to delve into data and automate the detection of events that would otherwise go unnoticed in the midst of huge volumes of data. Unique, patented, modelling tools allow rapid characterisation of data trends to support real-time detection of events. Early detection of changes in system behaviour have never been easier to spot. (http://cybula.squarespace.com/the-company/)